THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) Since sale of coal is made on free on Rail/Road (FOR) basis, the decisions in respect of mode of transportation is taken by the buyer and Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has limited scope, irrespective of distance, in encouraging movement of coal by Rail.

(b) About 9382 persons are earning their livelihood by engaging themselves as tipper operator mechanic and helpers with Ex-Servicemen Transporting Agency and Civilian Transport Contractors.

(c) As indicated in the reply to part (a) above, Mahanadi Coalfields Limited has limited scope to consider mode of transport to be used by consumers. However, Mahanadi Coalfields Ltd. encourages Project Affected People (PAPs) to from a Co-operative Society and start transporting coal as contractor at a approved scheduled rate without entering into tendering process. In addition to that, nearby consumers are also being allowed to transport by road and displaced/Substantially affected persons are being engaged by them also. In addition to above, 1900 trucks of coal are being lifted by different consumers through road transport from Talcher field.

Underground fire in coal mines in Jharkhand

1836. SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether underground fire has been noticed in the coal mines in Jharkhand;

(b) if so, whether Government has calculated the extent of area where this problem exists;

(c) the reasons for the problem;

(d) whether any action has been taken to contain the fire in these mines; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): (a) As reported by Coal India Limited (CIL), three subsidiary companies of CIL namely Eastern Coalfield Limited (ECL), Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) and Central Coalfield Limited (CCL) are in operation in the State of Jharkhand. Out of above three subsidiaries, in two subsidiaries namely BCCL and CCL, fire has been noticed. In BCCL fire has been noticed over an extensive area in Jharia Coalfield and in CCL fire has been noticed in two underground coal mines.

(b) BCCL : At the time of Nationalisation of coal mines, BCCL had inherited 70 mine fires, covering an area of 17.32 sq. km. Due to some concrete efforts by BCCL, 10 fires could be liquidated completely. In the meantime, 7 more fires have been identified in Jharia coalfield. Presently, there are 67 fires out of which 9 are underground fires sealed behind the stopping and are now at dormant state. Remaining 58 fires cover a total surface area of 8.90 sq. km.

CCL : In CCL leasehold area, fire exists in Sarubera and Churi underground mines only with the approximate extent of fire being 26719 square meters.

(c) In BCCL, cause of underground fire is basically unscientific mining activities done in the past.

In CCL, the reason for both the mine was spontaneous heating of coal.

(d) and (e) Efforts made by BCCL to combat the fires, are as under:

(i) During 1976-88, 22 fire projects dealing with fire were sanctioned by the coal company, for a total investment of Rs. 114.57 crores covering the then 58 fires out of 70 fires existing at the time of nationalisation.

(ii) Approximately sum of Rs. 76 crores has been spent in fire fighting measures against these fire projects till March 1997. The implementation of these schemes, though could not extinguish all the fires completely, but facilitated to achieve following:

- Liquidated 10 fires completely.
- Controlled majority of the fires from total devastation.
- Reduced the total surface area affected by fire to 8.90 sq. km. from earlier reported area of 17.32 sq. km.
- Reduced the blockage of coal from 1864 MT to 1453 MT.

Presently, as per the Master Plan for Jharia coalfield dealing with fire, subsidence, rehabilitation and diversion of surface infrastructure, approved by the Government in August 2009, an Action Plan has been prepared for dealing all 67 fires (58+9) and a total fund of Rs.2311.50 cores has been earmarked.

In CCL, Experts were engaged from Central Institute of Mining and Fuel Research (CIMFR) for conducting detailed scientific studies immediately after detection of fires. The fire fighting measures were taken as per the guidance and under the supervision of the experts.

Closure of power plants due to short supply of coal

1837. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state whether it is a fact that many public and private sector power plants would be closed down because of short supply of coal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL): As reported by the Central Electricity Authority, the coal stock at power plants improved from a level of 9.29 Million Tonnes as on 31st October, 2009 to 10.65 Million Tonnes as on 30th November, 2009. The number of critical power stations having coal stock of less than 7 days reduced from a level of 27 to 25 during the same period. It is expected that coal production and transportation are likely to improve further and therefore, closing down of power plants due to short supply of coal is not being apprehended.

Allocation of coal blocks to CIL

1838. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state: